

Captive French girls released

BEIRUT (AP) — Two little French girls held hostage with their mother and five Belgians for over a year were released Monday and flown to Paris, a spokesman for their captors said. Walid Khalaf, spokesman for the dissident Palestinian group of Abu Nidal, said the girls — Marie-Laure, 7, and Virginie, 6 — were "on their way to Paris by plane and will arrive there within a few hours." He did not specify the flight they were on. Both their father, Pascal Bettle, and their grandmother, Brigitte Valente, had left Beirut earlier in the day aboard a Paris-bound Middle East Airlines plane after spending Christmas in Lebanon. "I ask their (the girls') father to be ready with lots of Christmas gifts to reunite with his daughters," Khalaf told the Associated Press. He refused to say where the two girls were released. But there had been widespread speculation that they would be freed either in Libya or Algeria where Abu Nidal's so-called French Revolutionary Council also has bases. Khalaf had said earlier that the girls have been told of their imminent release and that their mother, Jacqueline Valente, no longer objected to this (see page 2).

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AROUND THE WORLD...

EEC sending olive oil to glutted West Bank

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The European Economic Community (EEC) is sending Italian olive oil as emergency food aid to Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where there is a huge olive oil surplus. EEC representative Gwyn Morgan confirmed that the oil was part of a package of emergency food aid financed by the 12-nation community's executive commission for the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian refugees. Asked why the EEC had sent olive oil, Morgan said: "The European Commission is innocent of deciding what to send. It simply answers requests from UNRWA."

Soviet congress nomination begins

MOSCOW (R) — Nomination of candidates to the new Congress of People's Deputies began Monday as the Soviet Union began preparing for the first nationwide election in which voters will have the novelty of choice. The Soviet news agency TASS said 100 people had already been nominated by the end of the day as candidates for seats in the new parliament, which was approved earlier this month as part of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's political reform programme. The 2,225 members of the congress, the lower chamber of a two-tier legislature, will be chosen March 26 in multi-candidate elections. Elections like this have been tried before on an experimental basis but never in a nationwide poll.

Riots kill 19 in South Indian city

NEW DELHI (R) — Troops were being sent to the South Indian city of Vijayawada Monday night after 19 people died in riots which erupted following the murder of a local politician, the Press Trust of India said. It said paramilitary police reinforcements were already patrolling the streets of the city in Andhra Pradesh state to restore order and enforce a 24-hour curfew. At least six people died when police opened fire on crowds rioting after state assembly politician Mohanaranga Rao and two companions were axed to death early Monday, the news agency said. The violence later spread to nearby towns and police said 150 buses had been set on fire and a number of shops and cinemas attacked. The politician, a member of the Congress (I) Party, was attacked in a camp near his home where he had been fasting for four days in protest at alleged police harassment.

Frontline states meet in Lusaka

DAR ES SALAAM (R) — The six frontline states of southern Africa will hold a one-day summit in Lusaka Tuesday, official sources in Tanzania said Monday. Tanzanian President Ali Hassan Mwinyi would fly to Zambia for the meeting Tuesday morning and return later the same day, they added. The sources did not say what would be discussed at the meeting, which they said would also be attended by the presidents of Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola and Mozambique.

57 arrested, 50 sought in Assiut

ASSIUT, Egypt (AP) — Security forces arrested 57 Muslim fundamentalist students suspected of anti-state activities and are searching for another 50, police sources said Monday. The sources, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the detainees were seized as they distributed leaflets attacking the government. The leaflets singled out President Hosni Mubarak and Interior Minister Zaid Badr, who handles internal security. The detainees brought to about 300 the number of alleged Muslim extremists, mostly students at Assiut University, rounded up during the past month, the sources said. They said the leaflets demanded the release of students detained earlier. Iran plans for council elections

NICOSIA (AP) — Iran's first council elections to select more than 300,000 representatives could be held by this spring pending approval of a plan submitted by the Interior Ministry, the official Islamic Republic News Agency reported Monday. The agency quoted Hussein Malek Ahmadi, the Interior Ministry's director for social affairs, as saying that "the Interior Ministry has the means to hold the elections early next year (starting March 1989), and we have a firm intention to carry it out, but we are awaiting final approval of the plan." The ministry was hoping for a date between April 21 to May 21, IRNA reported Ahmadi as saying (Iran spills out laws for parties, page 2).

Turkish police hold 9 in killing of diplomat

ANKARA (R) — Turkish police investigating the killing of a Portuguese diplomat have detained nine people and uncovered several important clues, a regional prosecutor said Monday. The body of Second Secretary Sergio Manuel Pinto Moutinho, a 39-year-old last Friday, was found beside his car near the southern town of Tarsus last Friday. He had been stabbed 16 times in the face, neck and torso. "We have detained nine people for questioning. We have important clues," Tarsus Prosecutor Galip Topcuoglu told the Anatolian news agency. An official said Saturday that the killing was unlikely to have been politically-inspired and police were treating it as a criminal incident.

Britain urges Afghan rulers to step down

LONDON (R) — British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe urged Afghanistan's government Tuesday to step down as soon as possible in order to avoid more bloodshed. He made the call in a message marking the ninth anniversary of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan, which touched off a civil war with guerrillas opposed to the Moscow-backed Kabul government. Howe said all the parties should show restraint. This was a time to heal wounds, not to settle old scores. "The transition from the present unrepresentative regime in Kabul to a government established by a genuine act of self-determination will not be easy," he said. "If still more bloodshed is to be avoided, the regime must step down of its own accord — the sooner the better. But it is also important that all parties including the resistance exercise wisdom and restraint," Howe added.

Intellectuals call for Cuban plebiscite

MADRID (R) — More than 100 intellectuals and entertainers urged President Fidel Castro Tuesday to follow the example of Chile and let Cubans decide in a plebiscite whether he should stay in power. They signed an open letter to Castro which was drafted by Cuban exiles and made available to news organizations in Madrid before publication as an advertisement in newspapers in several countries. They said Castro should call elections if Cubans voted "No" in an internationally-supervised ballot. He will mark his 30th year in power Jan. 1.

Israel says 3 commandos killed

TEL AVIV (AP) — Israeli paratroopers killed three commandos Monday in a clash north of the Israeli-Lebanese border, the army and Israeli armed forces said. An Israeli patrol spotted the squad during the night in the area of Meiss Al Jabal village, several metres north of the border, and opened fire, killing the three, the army command said in a statement. It said that soldiers found Kalashnikov rifles, ammunition, anti-tank rocket launchers, leaflets and other equipment near the bodies.

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Times Foundation
جريدة تليّن يوميّة независимة للطباعة في الأردن

16 held in Sudan coup plot

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sixteen military men and civilians arrested in connection with an aborted coup attempt had planned political assassinations and a takeover of the armed forces general command Dec. 8, a military source said Monday. The Sudan News Agency quoted a source at the army's general command as saying that the alleged plotters, who were loyal to former President Jaafar Numeiri, had a two-part plan ready for the takeover Dec. 8. A group of them was supposed to seize a number of political leaders, including Prime Minister Sadeq Al Mahdi, while another group was to occupy vital and strategic departments such as the army general command and the radio station. He did not say if there were others involved in the plot, but said that those arrested were still being interrogated. No charges have yet been filed. The military source said that on Dec. 7, alleged ringleader, Lt. Col. Hassan Mohammad Ahmad Nasr, told his associates that Dec. 8 was the zero hour, but that they faced a problem in securing fuel supply for their vehicles. Gasoline is rationed in Sudan, and car owners have to queue for several hours to get their weekly supply.



His Majesty King Hussein Monday confers with Saudi Minister of Hajj Sheikh Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasi'e (centre) in a meeting attended by

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Sheikh Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat (Petra photo)

Qasem confers with senior Iraqi official

AMMAN (Petra) — Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem met at his office Monday with the first under-secretary of the Iraqi Foreign Ministry, Wisam Al Bahawi, and discussed issues of concern to Jordan and Iraq.

Other questions tackled at the meeting, which was held in the presence of Iraqi Ambassador to Jordan Ghafel Jassem Hussein, included extraordinary session of the Arab League Council in Tunis next month and a number of world issues and an international conference on the use of chemical weapons to be held in Paris.

The King's phone call came within the framework of continued consultation and coordination between the two leaders.

At the audience, attended by Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat, King Hussein listened to a briefing on an Islamic awqaf ministers conference due to be held in Saudi Arabia in the next two months and the subjects to be discussed at the conference.

Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e conveyed to King Hussein the greetings of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia and those of Saudi Crown Prince and Deputy Prime Minister Prince Abdullah Ibn Abdul Aziz.

Also Monday, His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan received Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e, who conveyed to him the greetings of the Saudi crown prince.

Prince Hassan and Sheikh Abdul Wasi'e reviewed bilateral cooperation in various fields.

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King, Saudi minister review cooperation in religious affairs

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Monday received Saudi Minister of Hajj and Awqaf Sheikh Abdul Wahab Abdul Wasi'e and reviewed with him bilateral cooperation in various fields, particularly awqaf, pilgrimage, preaching and guidance affairs.

At the audience, attended by Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Minister Abdul Aziz Al Khayyat, King Hussein listened to a briefing on an Islamic awqaf ministers conference due to be held in Saudi Arabia in the next two months and the subjects to be discussed at the conference.

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Relatives leave Lebanon with tape, no captives

BEIRUT (R) — The relatives of two French girls held hostage in Lebanon left Monday saying they still hoped for the quick release of the children, whose freedom was promised as a Christmas gift.

"I am very optimistic. I think the release will be in the next few days. I firmly believe that, 'Pascal Betille, the girls' father, told Reuters before leaving west Beirut.

Betille's ex-wife Jacqueline Valente and their daughters Marie-Lature and Virginie were seized with five Belgians by Fateh Revolutionary Council (FRC) fighters aboard the yacht Silco. The FRC, led by Abu Nidal, said in November 1987 that it had captured the eight off the Israeli-occupied Gaza Strip and they were Jewish Israeli spies. Their relatives insist they are Roman Catholics.

Betille, Valente's brother-in-law Andre Metral and mother Brigitte, came to Beirut to spend Christmas as near as possible to

the hostages. They brought teddy bears and other toys for the girls. Betille said Virginie was six years old and Marie-Lature seven. The FRC had said the girls were aged eight and six respectively.

The relatives met FRC official Walid Khaled Sunday at a Palestinian camp in west Beirut. He assured them the girls would soon be released after being taken to a safe place outside Lebanon.

Khaled said the decision to free them was a Christmas gesture prompted by an appeal made by Libyan leader Muammar Qaddafi. He would not say whether they would be released in Libya.

The FRC also presented videotapes of Valente and the five Belgians sending Christmas greetings to families and friends.

Valente, who said she was pregnant but well-treated, is held with her boyfriend Fernand Houtekens, father of the unborn baby and a year-old girl born in captivity and nicknamed

"Liberte".

The others are Fernand's wife Emmanuel, Emmanuel's wife Godelieve and their teenage children Laurent and Valerie.

Asked if he was disappointed

at leaving Lebanon with a video tape instead of his daughters, Betille said: "I am also leaving, with a confirmation of their release."

"I hope that the others will be released and that Jacqueline will have a safe delivery," he added.

Betille said he was given legal custody of the girls, who were taken away by their mother in 1985. He did not know where they were until reading about the capture of the Silco in the press, he added.

The FRC said in November it

would set the girls free, but Valente later said on tape that she wanted them with her. In the latest videotape, she said she would not return to France after her release.

Shamir to unveil 'peace plan' based on Camp David accords

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir will soon give details of a Middle East peace initiative based on the 1978 Camp David accords with Egypt, his chief spokesman Avi Pazner said Monday.

Pazner told Reuters: "It is not in the form of a plan, it is a set of ideas which he will reveal in the next few weeks. The ideas he is working on are based on Camp David."

Shamir announced on Israeli Television's Arabic service Sunday that he would disclose his peace proposals in the coming weeks.

Pazner said Shamir would give details of the initiative before a Washington visit early in February to meet George Bush, who will be installed as U.S. president by then.

The director-general of the

prime minister's office, Yossi Ben-Aharon, told the evening newspaper Maariv that Shamir's initiative would include a timetable for a period of Palestinian "autonomy" in the occupied territories.

He said it envisaged a process of gradual change in the territories until the determination of their final status.

The Camp David accords provide for limited "self-rule" for the 1.75 million Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip, with elections for an "administrative" council.

The final status of the areas were to be negotiated within five years of "autonomy" but talks have never taken place.

Pazner said Shamir favoured elections to choose Palestinian representatives for negotiations, but only after an "autonomy" programme was established.

Diplomats said any Shamir plan would call for peace talks under the superpowers' supervision, attended by Egypt, Jordan and Palestinian representatives not from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Israel rejects a U.N.-sponsored international peace conference.

Diplomats noted that elections in the occupied territories would require at least the tacit approval of the PLO otherwise they would be boycotted by Palestinians.

Egypt has said the Camp David provisions for the Palestinians have been overtaken by events but Saturday President Hosni Mubarak said he would visit Israel if this would help achieve lasting peace.

Israel rejects talks with the PLO in spite of the United States' resumption of contacts with the PLO this month after a 13-year break.

The parliamentary decision is most unfortunate because it means there will be no peace in the Sudan. It means we have no

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

PLO takes step towards government-in-exile

(Continued from page 1)

Mustafa Al Zibri, deputy leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine — did not attend the meetings.

Zibri has been sharply critical of Arafat's peace initiative.

The PLO will demand a corridor connecting the West Bank with the Gaza Strip as one of its conditions if negotiations with Israel over the occupied territories get started, a West German magazine said this weekend.

The Hamburg-based Spiegel magazine, in an interview with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, also said the Palestinians would continue to insist that Jerusalem be part of an independent state.

In the Spiegel interview, Arafat was asked if he would insist on sticking to U.N. resolution 181, which delineates borders for

Israel and Palestine, including areas that the Israelis have occupied for 40 years.

"We can negotiate over that in the peace conference," Arafat also insisted that the Arab Jerusalem must be the Palestine capital.

"We demand our Arab Jerusalem, not more and not less," Arafat was quoted as saying.

"But in all cases we will insist on establishing a corridor between West Jordan and the Gaza Strip. It is not acceptable for us to establish a state split into two parts," Spiegel quoted Arafat as saying.

West Jordan is the term often used in German language when referring to the West Bank.

Another leaflet distributed Sunday in Nablus by leaders of the uprising voiced sympathy with the families of the victims of a Pan Am jet crash last Wednesday in which 258 people on board were killed and 20 on the ground were reported dead or missing.

"We the Palestinian Arab people... we victims of state terrorism, stand strongly without hesitation against all forms of terrorism," the leaflet said.

Also Sunday, left-wing legislator Dedi Zucker said that dozens of Palestinians have died in the past year of serious illnesses because the army refused to pay for special treatment at Israeli hospitals.

Zucker said the army had recently cut its budget for hospitalising West Bank Arabs in Israel, making the services inaccessible. The defence establishment told him budget cuts were necessary because Palestinians have refused to pay taxes as part of the uprising, Zucker said.

Spiegel also quoted no PLO

PLO money'

(Continued from page 1)

movement by war hero Abdul Kader Al Hussein.

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Israel claims contacts

(Continued from page 1)

straight term last Thursday.

"This is a good time. The Arabs now have the feeling that Shamir represents Israel and that if they want ties with us, the address is Yitzhak Shamir," Ahimeir said.

Israel's ambassador in Cairo, Shimon Shamir, was holding meeting with Egyptian officials to determine whether a Mubarak visit was possible, said another Shamir spokesman, Avi Pazner. Thomas Pickering, the out-

going U.S. ambassador to Israel, told reporters in Tel Aviv he would welcome such a summit. "It... is certainly something the U.S. would encourage and welcome," Pickering said.

Mubarak offered to visit Israel in reply to a question by Al Anbaa whether he would go "if that would resolve the whole Palestinian issue?"

"Why not?" Mubarak replied. "If this visit would lead to solving the problem, and if it would lead to establishing a just peace, then I am ready."

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

119L-SM10,3

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 77111-19

PROGRAMME ONE

15:30 Koran
16:00 Programmatic review
16:30 Children programmes
17:15 News summary in Arabic
18:00 Programmatic review
18:20 Religious programme
18:50 Programmatic on Environment
19:10 Agricultural programme
19:45 Programme review
20:00 News in Arabic
20:40 Arabic series
21:30 Programmatic review
21:40 Local programme
22:30 Local series
23:00 News summary in Arabic

PROGRAMME TWO

17:30 A French film
19:00 News in French
19:15 French varieties

10-30 News in Hebrew 20:00 News in Arabic 20:30 Who's the Boss 21:10 Specials 22:20 Adderly

PRAYER TIMES

05:07 Fajr (Sunrise) Dafa
06:24 Dhuhr
11:57 Asr
14:21 Magrib
16:44 Isha

CURCHES

Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 622785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 627440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757.
Terrassa Church Tel. 622366.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.

623543

Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 77261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.

Annam International Church Tel. 683226.

Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811265.

Rainbow Congregation Tel. 623605.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 831264.

Max/min. temp.

Amman 0/8

Deserts 0/10

Aqaba 9/17

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 9, Aqaba 16. Humidity readings: Amman 80 per cent, Aqaba 48 per cent.

The effect of the depression will decrease gradually. So it will be relatively cold and partly cloudy. In Aqaba, it will be partly cloudy with northerly wind and calm sea.

Max/min. temp.

Amman 0/8

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

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Queen Noor to open cultural season at RCC

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Culture and National Heritage will open its end of year cultural season Wednesday at the Royal Cultural Centre under the patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor. Minister of Culture and National Heritage Mohammad Hammouri said the event will be a manifestation of Jordanian plastic art by 88 Jordanian artists who will display more than 200 pieces of art including paintings, ceramics and graphics.

There will also be two seminars during the week long cultural event dealing with plastic art, according to Hammouri who said that the gathering will be an annual event from now on.

On Thursday Queen Noor will visit the city of Irbid where she will hold meetings with the city Mayor Abdul Razzak Tabeish and Governor Akram Al Nasar, who will explain details of development plans for the Irbid region.



A car splashes water around Sunday after heavy rains that hit Jordan in the past three days (Photo by Yousef Al Allan)

Locusts threaten farms

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The Ministry of Agriculture has approached dealers in agricultural pesticides and representatives of agricultural companies in Jordan to provide whatever assistance they can offer to enable the country fend off the danger of desert locusts, now threatening farms and agricultural areas.

Minister of Agriculture Yousef Hamdan Al Jahr Sunday explained the situation at a meeting in his office and received immediate support, and pledges for help in this affair.

A committee was immediately formed and entrusted with the task of determining the Ministry of Agriculture's needs to be met by the local firms.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

HINDAWI ATTENDS GRADUATION: Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister Thouqan Hindawi Saturday attended the graduation of participants in a three-month training course in higher management, organised by the Institute of Public Administration, and presented them with their diplomas and royal gifts to those excelling in the programme. (Petra)

CONSTRUCTION OF SCHOOLS: The Ministry of Education has carried out school constructions in a number of villages of Jizeh sub-district at a total cost of JD 386,876, in implementation of the recommendations of the educational development conference recommendations. The ministry has also built a preparatory school for girls in Arish village in Madaba district at a cost of JD 175,000. (Petra)

JUST TAKES PART IN IRAQ SYMPOSIUM: The Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) has participated in a symposium on methods of education at the Arab universities, held in Baghdad last week. The university was represented by Dean of Scientific Research Hassan Malkawi, who submitted a working paper on roles of specialised medical workshops in medical education. (Petra)

MEDICAL TREATMENT CARDS: Madaba Health Department has issued medical treatment cards to 98 per cent of the 100,000 population of Madaba, while the Education Department has carried out school construction projects in the district at a cost of JD 39,147. (Petra)

SCOUT MARCH: A scout march, organised by the Ministry of Education's Educational Activities Department, left Himma area in the Jordan Valley to Aqaba where it will be joined by scouts from Ajloun, Bani Kanana, Koura and Greater Amman Educational Department. The march aims to acquaint participants with their country. (Petra)

CLOTHES FOR THE NEEDY: The Jordan National Red Crescent Society has supplied its Ma'an based branch with two tonnes of clothes and shoes for distribution to the needy families in Ma'an and Zara village. (Petra)

SCOUTING CAMP: A four-day scouting camp for 45 students from the North Jordan Valley schools was held Monday at North Shouneh. Participants in the camp, organised by the North Jordan Valley Education Department, will receive information on first aid, and fire extinguishing. They will also be briefed on the objectives of the Red Crescent and Red Cross societies. (Petra)

REVIEW OF NAOUR PROJECTS: The Naour sub-district governor Monday called on all village councils to undertake a comprehensive review of the future projects proposed for implementation in the sub-district and those which have been carried out, with a view to giving priority to those badly needed. He also called on all joint services councils and village councils to collect all amounts due by citizens before the end of the year. (Petra)

WADI SHUEIB RESTHOUSE: The South Shuneh municipality has been entrusted with operating the Wadi Shueib resthouse in the Jordan Valley region. The South Shuneh mayor said that the Ministry of Tourism, which had earlier undertaken the task, will only provide advice and consultancy services from now on. (Petra)

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ An art exhibition by Friends of Plastic Art in Gulf countries at the National Gallery
- ★ The youth's art exhibition which displays 101 paintings showing the different aspects of social life in Jordan at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ An exhibition of works by Contemporary Arab Artists at Al Wasiti Art Gallery.
- ★ An exhibition of paintings by Jordanian artist Farouk Lambaz at Alia Art Gallery — 5:30 p.m.

FILMS

- ★ A Chinese film entitled "The Crescent Moon" at the Royal Cultural Centre — 8:00 p.m.
- ★ A documentary on Hollywood film director George Cukor at the American Centre — 7:00 p.m.

SYMPOSIA

- ★ A symposium on the use of solar energy and wind energy for pumping water at the Mechanical Engineering Department, at the Royal Scientific Society.

Students sit for Tawjihi exams today

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — A total of 58,618 students in Jordan will Tuesday embark on an eight-day mid-year Tawjihi examination session set by the Ministry of Education.

A ministry spokesman said of these 15,262 students will sit for the scientific stream, 34,517 for the literary stream, and the rest will take examinations for the industrial, commercial, agricultural, nursing and hotel training streams.

The spokesman said sufficient halls have been assigned and teachers have been appointed to supervise the examination procedure and the marking of papers. The students will be taking the second and final examination session in June 1989.

Earlier this month the Ministry of Education announced that students in the occupied West

Bank schools will also take the General Secondary School Certificate (Tawjihi) Examinations one time at the end of the current 1988-1989 school year by June 1989.

Schools in the two banks of Jordan normally prepare their students for the two-session examinations at the Tawjihi level, but students in the West Bank last year took only the first session and because they were not able to sit for the second in view of the on going uprising, the results of the first session were considered for both terms.

Schools in the occupied lands have been closed for more than a year. And the students were reported taking lessons in churches, mosques and private homes, or in the fields to make up for the lack of proper training in classes.

Cabinet endorses housing strategy

AMMAN (Petra) — The council of ministers has approved recommendations by a ministerial committee on a national housing strategy in Jordan and said that the housing department, which

has been attached to the Ministry of Planning should now be associated to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

The council also decided to

shift responsibility for the Urban Development Department from the Ministry of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment to the Ministry of Public Works and Housing.

Ministries, society to discuss exporting eggs to Arab countries

AMMAN (Petra, J.T.) — The Ministries of Agriculture and Industry and Trade will support efforts by the Jordan Society for the Production and Marketing of Eggs (JSPME) in marketing table eggs in neighbouring Arab countries, according to preliminary agreement reached Monday in talks between Minister of Industry and Trade Hamdi Tabbaa and the society director.

The minister said the society, being the only party responsible for the production and marketing of table eggs in Jordan and

marketing the product abroad, should be backed and helped to promote its activities.

At the meeting an agreement was reached according to which the society will prepare a working paper on specifications for poultry farms which produce eggs for the market, and submit that paper after a month to a meeting which will group specialists and officials from the two ministries and the society.

The coming meeting, according to the agreement, will determine the society's future responsibilities towards organising the production of eggs in the Kingdom.

Last summer the society president, Suleiman Freimeh, said Jordan produces some 500 million table eggs annually but only 400 million are consumed in Jordan.

Some of the locally produced eggs have been sold to Iraq and South Yemen but a large quantity remains unsold. According to society sources Jordan's poultry farmers sustained a JD 1.6 million loss in 1986 due to a huge surplus of table eggs.

Hmoud, Ma'an Municipal Council members review 3-year plan

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-year plan for Ma'an in southern Jordan was reviewed here Monday by Minister of Municipal and Rural Affairs and the Environment Marwan Hmoud and the new Ma'an Municipal Council members.

The plan entails carrying out municipal projects, expanding public services and expanding the Ma'an city boundary, as well as the municipality's new task in the light of its financial situation.

On Sunday Hmoud and directors of the ministry's various departments reviewed regional planning in the country and the different uses of land.

Hmoud said later that discuss-

sions centred on means of saving as much as possible of arable land for agricultural use and organising plots of land to be used for urban development in different provinces.

The ministry has provided sufficient maps of the regions of Irbid, in the north, Mafrak in the centre and the southern regions of Tafleah and Karak with the help of the Royal Jordanian Geographic Centre, Hmoud said.

The minister said the meeting also discussed the national strategy on the environment which is being prepared by specialists in order to ensure a greater measure of environmental protection from pollution.

He added that ministry specialists are now maintaining control over sources of pollution to the Zarqa River largely caused by dumping factory waste.

The ministry's plans to study the environment in Jordan entails a general survey of the environment by collecting data and information from various regions.

"The information will serve planners and policy makers in the coming stage of development," the minister noted.

He said a team of Swedish experts is due here in the coming month to conduct the survey and help Jordan determine the causes of pollution in the Zarqa Governorate.

He added that ministry specialists are now maintaining control over sources of pollution to the Zarqa River largely caused by dumping factory waste.

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Better airline safety

ALTHOUGH the exact cause of the Pan American Airways disaster last Thursday has yet to be determined, the crash of Flight 103 from London en route to New York, has highlighted a chronic problem facing all airlines: Aging jets still in operation. And it is now revealed that the Boeing 747 used by Pan Am on that ill-fated flight was an aging jet manufactured nearly two decades ago. While the age factor of the jet in question cannot be named the culprit for the crash in view of the preponderance of the evidence thus far pointing to the high probability that sabotage was responsible for its mid-air disintegration, structural fatigue of jets still used by airlines the world over has yet to be accorded the scrutiny that it deserves.

One of the hypothesis advanced in the aftermath of the Pan Am crash was that the jet in question was so old that it may have suffered from structural fatigue causing the collapse of one of the wings of the airplane while airborne over Scotland. The odds are against this being the cause of the crash. Nevertheless the problem of aging remains a serious issue that deserves more attention and concern by both manufacturers of airplanes and their users. It would seem fitting even from a layman's point of view that airplanes be given a life span during which they may operate safely. Unfortunately, however, neither manufacturers of airplanes nor the airlines that deploy them are keeping sufficient tab of the aging problem that contributes to potentially fatal structural fatigue in the airplanes operated worldwide. The day will surely come when airlines would be expected to announce the type and age of aircraft operated. Likewise, manufacturers of aircraft would be expected by law to announce the safe life expectancy of their products. This is the only sensible way to keep abreast of events and circumstances leading to aviation disasters.

Perhaps one of the principal reasons for the relaxation of safeguards affecting civilian air transportation is deregulation. Deregulation and cutthroat competition between airlines have led to cutting corners at the cost of decreasing safety and comfort. But it so happens that flying is a very serious and hazardous business, and that the safety factor must never be sacrificed for the sake of profitability and material success. From now on airlines would be better advised to advertise not only their prices competitive as they may be but also the age of their equipment and their standard of maintenance. This is of course over and above the security checks that must be maintained at the highest level possible. No amount of inconvenience to passengers can be too much for the sake of making sure that sabotage and other forms of threats to the security of flying are kept at minimal level if not outright eliminated.

ARABIC PRESS EDITORIALS

ALL THREE Jordanian Arabic dailies on Monday tackled the situation in the occupied Arab territories as the uprising continues and current efforts are maintained at the international level to bring about a just peace. Al Ra'i daily said that Israel wants to impose on the Arabs a kind of peace that would allow it to perpetuate its hold over the occupied Arab territories so that Zionist expansionist plans can continue unhindered. Israeli leaders want to have land and peace together and are not ready to offer any concessions to reach a genuine peace and a lasting settlement, the paper added. It said that despite the PLO's acceptance of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and despite the clear Arab orientation towards peace, the Israelis continue to adhere to their extremism policies and to maintain their iron fist strategy in confrontation with the Palestinians. Israel's latest decision to set up eight new settlements in the occupied Arab lands was a clear message to the world that Tel Aviv would never give up Arab land and was not ready to swap land for peace, the paper said. Since the new coalition government in Israel has been empowered to take any decisions and execute all resolutions imposed by the extremist Zionist groups, the paper concluded, then one can have little hopes of any real orientation towards peace in the foreseeable future.

Writing in Al Ra'i Arabic daily the newspaper's editor Rakan Al Majali tackles the position of Syria in relation with Arab issues and the current initiatives for peace. There is always an importance for the Syrian role whether issues are related to Lebanon, the PLO or the confrontation with Israel, largely due to Syria's geographical location and its proximity to all these important issues, the writer says. Majali says of course Syria does not hold all the cards in the Middle East question but it has a significant role in Lebanon and in any military or political solutions for that country's internal problems. Although Syria continues to criticize Arafat's steps and policies and maintains its support for Arafat's opponents, Damascus is not really against the current Palestinian moves towards achieving peace, but in reality it rather blesses such moves which aim at a comprehensive settlement through the projected international peace conference. Majali says that there are now clear indications of real change in Syria's traditional policies, and its overtures to have peace with Iraq and Egypt stands out as further evidence that Damascus is determined to mend its fences with its Arab sisters and to embark on a role that would bring about peace to the region.

Al Dustour daily wrote Monday on the escalation in the current uprising in the occupied Arab territories which, it said, bears indications that the revolt is gaining ground and involving all the public sectors. Christmas Day Sunday was a good opportunity for the Palestinians to show solidarity and a further determination to step up their campaign of struggle for peace. Following the religious ceremonies in churches in Jerusalem, Bethlehem and Ramallah, the Arab masses went out into the streets stoning the Israeli soldiers in a real courageous show of solidarity with the residents of refugee camps in Gaza and other parts of the occupied land, the paper noted. The Israelis for their part seem to be determined to maintain their iron fist policy and are therefore continuing to confront the Palestinians with all forms of repression, the paper added.

Sawt Al Shaab daily called for an Arab summit which it said can deal with the current circumstances resulting from the on-going struggle in Palestine and the PLO's recent favourable moves towards peace. The paper said that the Israelis have formed a coalition government clearly bent on pursuing the repressive policies dictated by world Zionism and maintained by the Likud Blue and therefore one can expect more violence in the occupied lands resulting from further criminal actions by Israeli troops against the Arabs.

Arab side must brace for the worst

By Waleed Sadi

THERE ARE many absurdities in the Israeli stance on peace in the Middle East but its request that the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) accept its right to exist tops them all. For a regional power like Israel to call on a liberation organisation struggling for an embryonic state on its eastern flank till the Jordan River to recognise its right to exist defies all logic and common sense.

The answer may lie in the proposition that Israel's feeling of insecurity is so deep and profound that it even demands the assurances of an infant political organisation striving feverishly for acceptance from Israel above all. If anything, this Israeli anxiety accentuates the psychological dimension of the Arab-Israeli conflict and highlights the needs to address the non-geopolitical issues that divides the Israelis from the Arabs.

Upon closer scrutiny of the Israeli rejection of the PLO's peace overtures, one would readily discern that its disbelief of the good intentions of the Palestinian side permeates their reaction to such peace offers. There are voices from the Israeli side which question the sincerity of the Palestinian words of peace because they were made in the context of a press interview rather than in a formal setting as the United Nations General Assembly. Others, having been accustomed to bellicose voices from the Arab side, especially from the Palestinian side, find it difficult to believe their ears when

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat uttered the words that made history in the Middle East few weeks ago. With the latest poll in Israel indicating that 54 per cent of the Israeli now favour talks with the PLO on the basis of the assurances made public by the PLO on the terms for peace in the Middle East, there is an obvious erosion of the suspicion of the PLO's intentions entertained by Israelis. If the PLO persists in its on-going path and reaffirms its declared position to peace between Israel and the Arab side, one would expect further erosion in this Israeli scepticism at the end of the two-year.

If anxiety over the future is driving Israeli thinking to such negative proportions as the world has witnessed, especially in the wake of the Arab acceptance of United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, including the right of Israel to exist, one would have thought that Israel of all the parties to the Arab-Israeli conflict would insist on an international conference on peace in the Middle East under the direct aegis of the United Nations Security Council in order to receive the kind of security guarantees that it may need in the future. What better way to assuage Israeli fears for the future than to have the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council guaranteeing a peace treaty between Israel and the Arab side.

For many generations to come both the United States and Soviet

Union empires would continue to dominate the international scene. Surely Israel and Israel's long-term interests would call for the participation of the big powers in order to affix their signatures and seals of approval to any peace agreement that may ensue from negotiations between the Arab side and Israel.

Surely status quo poses greater dangers to Israel than movement in the direction of holding an international peace conference. And since the terms of any futuristic peace agreement in the Middle East have already been accepted by the parties beforehand all that remains would not necessitate any arms twisting for either the Arab or Israeli side.

Under the existing political situation in Israel not much can be expected to emerge in support of convening an international peace conference. A two-headed government can never muster the coordination level necessary to wage peace with the Arab side. All political projections point to the high probability that the Shamir-Peres government would enjoy the shortest life expectancy ever, the mushrooming support among Israeli voters for a dialogue with the PLO would have their chance to make their perspective better reflected in the next national Israeli elections. Till then the Arab side must brace itself for the worst.

Gulf Arab states set conditions for better Iran ties

By Philip Shehadi
Reuter

BAHRAIN — Iraq's Gulf Arab allies have linked full normalisation of ties with Iran to a lasting Gulf peace and a commitment by Tehran not to interfere in their internal affairs.

A Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit that ended Thursday, the first without war raging in the region, vowed to help turn a fragile Iraq-Iran ceasefire that took hold last August into permanent peace.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) cited ties of religion and heritage linking all Gulf states.

But there were no grand overtures of friendship to Iran in a cautious final communiqué that set general principles for the post-war era.

"Our relations in the region must be on this basis — peace, good neighbourliness and non-interference with normal relations," Bahraini Foreign Minister

Sheikh Mohammad Ibn Mubarak Al Khalifa told a news conference late Thursday.

The Gulf Arab states accused Iran during the last years of the war of mining their sea lanes, attacking their oil tankers and firing missiles into their oil installations.

Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iran last April, citing hostile acts including alleged support for internal sabotage.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Riyadh said Tehran instigated demonstrations at the annual Muslim pilgrimage in Mecca in July 1987 in which hundreds died in clashes with Saudi security forces. Tehran boycotted this year's pilgrimage.

Tension has eased since the ceasefire, and King Fahd ordered a halt in Saudi media attacks last October that was quickly reciprocated by Iran.

Iranian Parliamentary Speaker Hashemi Rafsanjani earlier this

week even predicted the resumption of normal ties with Riyadh soon.

But a Western observer at the summit said the Saudis and Iran first had to agree on the number of Iranian pilgrims who would be allowed to attend next year's pilgrimage and a ban on political demonstrations in Mecca.

Saudi Arabia was also concerned that pro-Iranian Muslim fundamentalists might still be active in the kingdom, he added.

Until such problems were overcome the GCC as a group was unlikely to make new overtures to Iran although individual states — notably Kuwait and Bahrain — have upgraded diplomatic representation since the ceasefire, the observer said.

"We will talk to the countries concerned and the permanent members of the Security Council... We hope we will have a breakthrough soon," Sheikh

Mohammad said. Another stumbling block is the fragility of the ceasefire and lack of progress towards full implementation of U.N. Resolution

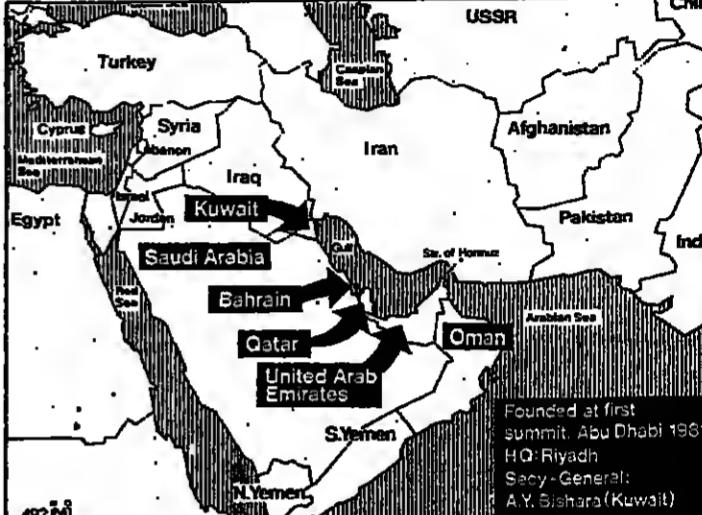
598 which calls for a troop withdrawal, exchange of prisoners and a comprehensive settlement of the eight-year-long conflict.

"We are now living in a period after the ceasefire. But we want to live in a period of permanent peace," Sheikh Mohammad said. Geneva peace talks adjourned indefinitely last month and the GCC states feel unable to let their guard down.

The summit pledged to make contact with the international community and especially permanent members of the U.N. Security Council to help implement Resolution 598 and get the talks moving.

"We will talk to the countries concerned and the permanent members of the Security Council... We hope we will have a breakthrough soon," Sheikh

Mohammad said. The Iran-Iraq war left a million killed or wounded and led to a major foreign naval build-up in the Gulf that has only slightly eased since the ceasefire.



A radar in question

In a column published in Al Ra'i Saturday, columnist Fahed Al Fanek wonders about the use of a radar purchased by Jordan recently from an American firm at a cost of more than \$10 million.

Jordan Televisioo. Al Fanek writes, enthusiastically carried the news about the purchase of the "modern" radar for Aqaba Airport which receives planes loaded with tourists. JTV, he continues, told us that the radar was one of the most modern and complicated pieces of equipment in the world, capable of dealing with 250 airplanes at once. It also said the radar was the first of its kind to be exported by the U.S.

Some Japanese companies are very interested in gaining a foothold in the Soviet market and in tapping the huge oil and mineral reserves in Siberia for Japan's benefit.

The Western diplomat said it would be political suicide for any leader to agree to a deal giving up Japan's claim to the islands.

"The Japanese government has great need or incentive to go against public opinion on it," said one Western diplomat.

Some Japanese companies are very interested in gaining a foothold in the Soviet market and in tapping the huge oil and mineral reserves in Siberia for Japan's benefit.

"We are thankful for that great device but we recollect the austerity measures taken by the government, measures which we are innocently supported," Al Fanek writes.

The Western diplomat said the economic benefits to Japan of a closer relationship with Moscow were overrated.

"Fifteen years ago there was all sort of talk about energy-for-technology deals and it never happened, not because of political considerations but because there wasn't the basic infrastructure in the world to support it," he said.

Having a radar of that kind, Al Fanek contends, costs no less than \$1 million in interest, maintenance and operational costs as well as spare parts — all this in view of the fact that in the course of a whole year no more than 25 airplanes are expected to land at Aqaba Airport. According to Al Fanek's calculations, the cost of one aircraft landing at Aqaba Airport is \$100,000.

Assuming each aircraft carries 100 passengers, the cost, as far as the government is concerned, for each tourist would be \$1,000, an

amount far less than what the government would pay on potential tourism on the whole, Al Fanek believes.

As for the radar being the first of its kind to be exported by the U.S., Al Fanek says: "We do not understand what that exactly means. Did the rest of the countries in the world refuse to use such a radar because of its high costs? Is it that airports all over the world, such as Singapore, Tokyo and Bahrain, find that their requirements are not up to the requirements of Aqaba Airport?"

Or is it perhaps that those countries are not as good as we are in putting aside foreign currencies for more productive purposes?" Al Fanek asks.

"We do not know whether this radar will serve the immense air traffic to Aqaba or whether it is the traffic that will serve the radar... to that effect, we now fear that new and modern planes will be purchased to fly on the Amman-Aqaba route at night in order to put the radar to use," Al Fanek continues.

Even in that case, he notes, no more than one aircraft would be flying on that route, and it could not possibly come into collision with itself because air traffic over Aqaba Airport is 'nil'. Even if such a radar were given as an American grant, Al Fanek concludes: "we are entitled to an opinion on how (that grant) would be put to use, in accordance with our priorities — such an amount is enough to build 50 schools, for example," Al Fanek concludes.

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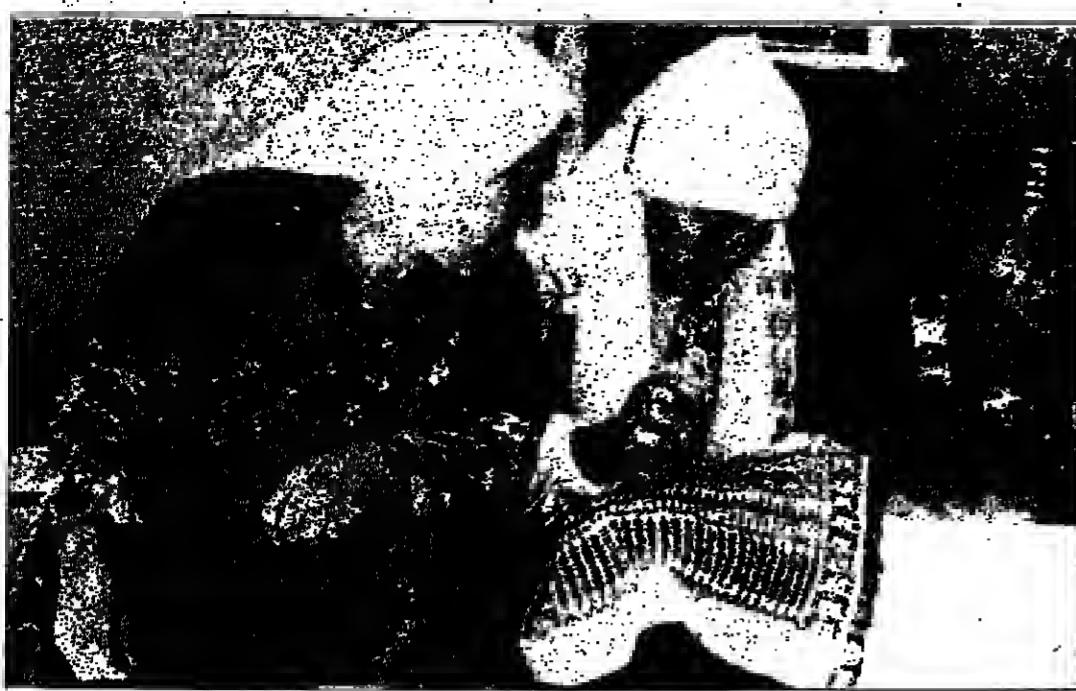
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Features



Palestinian camp women embroider cushions and tableclothes with traditional cross-stitch designs.



A woman carries her child through chest-deep water in Bangladesh.

Mennonites help world artisans help themselves

By Marcia Dunn
The Associated Press

PENNSYLVANIA — In this season of giving, a Mennonite-run group is offering handmade beads, baubles, baskets and other Third World crafts — not with profits in mind, but to give the world's poor a chance to help themselves.

The crafts come from Bangladesh, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Haiti, India, the Philippines and Thailand, among other nations.

"Generally, if you're trying to make a business out of this, you're going to go and find somebody who already knows how to do this as efficiently as possible," said Doug Dirks, marketing director for Selfhelp Crafts. "You buy from them. That's what makes sense. Our objective is a little bit different."

"We don't care so much about what North American customers

want to buy," agreed Selfhelp's Doris Daley. "We care more about finding this poor man in the slum of Calcutta and thinking, 'well, maybe we can sell his wares or help him along.'"

Patients at a leprosy rehabilitation centre in Thailand who carve teak elephants, widows in Guatemala who weave scarves and belts, and Haitian refugees who design greeting cards from banana tree bark — these are among the approximately 30,000 people making selfhelp crafts.

Floods, snakes

The tasks are taken very seriously, said Ms. Daley, citing a letter from Bangladesh that explained, "we're trying really hard to make the order, but please understand that we're a month or two late because our women are wading around in water up to their knees. The houses have all been flooded, and it's really hard to sew bags. There are snakes all over."

For some, the jobs mean the difference between eating and not eating. It's as simple as that," Dirks said.

For others, the work is a handhold to a new life.

"We're trying to give them jobs so they can earn their own money and they can spend it on a roof or medicine or schoolbooks or education for themselves, rather than sitting under a tree waiting for the relief truck to come rolling by," Ms. Daley said.

Selfhelp's mostly volunteer staff reaches out to needy neighbours from its Akron headquarters and warehouse in eastern Pennsylvania. The affiliated Selfhelp Crafts Canada, for which Ms. Daley serves as education coordinator, is based in New Hamburg, Ontario.

Both groups are run by the Mennonite central committee, a Development and Disaster Relief Organisation of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ Churches, gion.

Soon after he fell ill, cancellations of parties, festivals, weddings and politicians' travels away from the capital led the government to publicly declare that over-restraint "would not be what the emperor would want."

Groups opposed to the monarchy, ranging from radical leftists to Protestant Christian organisations, became more vocal in their criticism of the emperor.

Tokyo's police believe a left-wing group last week set fire to foliage on the grounds of a mausoleum where Hirohito's father and mother are buried. In October, radicals are believed to have vandalised the tomb of Japan's legendary first emperor.

For politicians, even the suggestion that the emperor bears responsibility for Japan's wartime actions can bring serious repercussions.

Hundreds of extreme rightists assembled in Nagasaki Wednesday and Thursday to protest what they called a disrespectful remark by Mayor Hitoshi Motoshima, an independent who had been backed by the Ruling Liberal Democratic Party.

On the 47th anniversary of Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbour, Motoshima said, "I think the emperor bears some responsibility for the war." The comment prompted death threats to the mayor of a city known as the second ever to suffer an atomic bombing.

During Hirohito's reign, Japan has seen years of war followed by defeat, foreign occupation and a rise to the status of economic superpower.

His reign also saw a redefining of the imperial role from sovereign head of state in the prewar constitution to postwar "symbol of the nation."

Enigma

But hidden behind a shroud of mystery and plagued by unanswered questions about his personal role during World War II, Hirohito is an enigma even to many Japanese.

"The emperor's illness is making people rethink their relationship with him and with each other in general," said Kazushi Sano, chief researcher of the Association of Shinto Shrines.

Local news media have reported that Hirohito has cancer, but the palace refuses to confirm or deny the reports. In September 1987, he underwent intestinal bypass surgery.

of respectful self-restraint among some, anti-monarchy protest among others.

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both part of the Anabaptist movement.

Peaceful living

Like the Amish, Mennonites favour plain, peaceful living and oppose military service and the taking of oaths. Lifestyles vary among the world's approximately 740,000 Mennonites, however, ranging from those who wear black and ride in horse-drawn buggies to the majority who enjoy modern clothes and amenities, including cars.

Mennonite missionaries often are Selfhelp's link to the needy in developing nations. Virtually all of Selfhelp's artisans live far from the tourist track and have no local market for their goods, crafted with traditional skills.

Selfhelp Crafts was begun in 1946 by Edna Byler, a Mennonite woman who had travelled to Puerto Rico with her husband to visit Mennonite Central Committee Volunteers. She was so impressed with local women's need-

work that she took several items home to sell for them.

Palestinian cross-stitch

Unprepared for the demand, Byler placed more orders to Puerto Rico. Within six years, she had added cross-stitched tablecloths made by Palestinian refugees and hand-carved Haitian woodenware.

"She would go to the bank or post office and people would wave her down and say, 'oh, Byler, what have you got in the trunk of your car today?'" Ms. Daley said. "We say that our first cash register was the pocket of Byler's apron."

Byler operated the project out of the basement of her home until the Mennonite Central Committee took over in 1962 and expanded it to 10 countries under the name of the Overseas Needlework and Crafts Project. Byler retired in 1969, and the name of the group was changed to Selfhelp Crafts the following year.

The first Selfhelp store opened in Manitoba in 1972. Two years later, the first U.S. shop opened in Bluffton, Ohio.

Now there are 72 Selfhelp shops in the United States and about 40 in Canada, run by 7,000 volunteers.

North American sales exceeded \$6 million in 1988, a record, and represented crafts from 33 countries, according to Dirks.

But not everyone welcomes the opportunity to buy imported crafts.

"We have a number of persons who look at something that says, 'Made in the Philippines,' 'Made in Thailand,' then they walk out," said Ann Roth, manager of the Selfhelp store in the nearby town of Bird in Hand.

"On several occasions, I've had a chance to explain to them why we import the products. Sometimes those have turned around and become sales because they realise what we're trying to do."

Hospitals where doctors sleep and rats run wild

By Barry Moody
Reuter

ROME — Hospitals where patients die at night without proper care, where doctors go to work only to sleep, where rats and cockroaches run around the

clotbs and patients got up at 3 a.m. so as not to queue for a bath.

The publicity attracted by Petrangolini's crusade has already borne fruit and she passionately believes in the power of her movement, which she says is backed by millions of citizens and has promoted a new awareness of patients' rights.

"You would not believe that a person like me, not a doctor, not a nurse, not an administrator has been able to do what I have done," she told Reuters.

"I have succeeded in opening new wards, in fixing bathrooms, in having wards painted... I have even succeeded in making the chairman of one local health authority resign."

In a 10-year struggle to give patients the same civil rights as healthy citizens, Petrangolini's tribunal has established offices in hospitals all over the country where patients, doctors and nurses can report abuses.

A law promoted by her group is now being discussed in parliament. It would give legal status to 60 "charters of the rights of the sick" drawn up by these offices and would set up machinery for bearing patients' complaints against doctors.

Doctors hotly rejected Donat Cattin's remarks and said they often worked in impossible conditions. They said the health services must be totally reorganised.

The minister has in fact proposed a series of reforms to increase efficiency and reduce waste so that the health service can be rationalised. Savings would help pay for 80,000 new hospital staff who he says are necessary.

Petrangolini, 37, a former foreign ministry official, said she was motivated by "a feeling of deep indignation about the systematic violation of the rights... of citizens who need to avail themselves of services vital for survival."

Forcefulness

She says many doctors are overwhelmingly arrogant and are not trained to consider the dignity of the patients, often identifying them only by numbers or the name of their illness.

At a hospital in northern Italy,

she said, a doctor told a burns patient screaming with pain that he would call the police if she did not keep quiet.

In another hospital when relatives called a night doctor for an old man with a cerebral haemorrhage he shouted down the ward: "There's no point in looking at him, he's going to die anyway."

Petrangolini has frequently taken things into her own hands to get results, including pushing hospital administrators into opening new, well-equipped wards and operating theatres closed only because of bureaucratic delays.

She found that at one psychiatric hospital, the patients had to drink out of a tap in the bathroom because there were no glasses. She went out and bought paper cups, shaming authorities into an extraordinary burst of activity.

"The next day they bought real glasses, jugs, bread baskets, clothes for the patients as well as repairing the electricity supply, and replacing window glass and catches."

Until he resumes his practice in his clinic, 11 King Hussein St. (Down town, opposite Jabi Rest.)

Dr. Zaid Hamzeh
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receives his patients on appointment in Mathas Hospital.

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By Eric Talmadge
The Associated Press

TOKYO — For bedridden Emperor Hirohito, Christmas day marked the anniversary of his father's death and the beginning of his 63rd year on the throne, the longest reign ever in the world's oldest imperial line.

On Christmas morning, court priests and members of the imperial family observed the anniversary of Emperor Taisho's death in 1926 at a simple wooden shrine on the forested grounds of the Imperial Palace in central Tokyo.

The Christmas rice is one of the most important of dozens held annually at the palace, and Emperor Hirohito normally would preside, say officials at the Imperial Household Agency, which manages palace affairs.

But this year, Hirohito, 87, bedridden and seriously ill with internal hemorrhaging, was represented by the Chief Court Priest, Motofumi Higashizono, Hirohito's wife, Empress Nagako, 85, was also absent.

Hirohito's illness, which began three months ago, has rekindled public interest in the imperial institution — prompting a mood

of respectful self-restraint among some, anti-monarchy protest among others.

"The emperor is like air," said Shizuka Kamei, a conservative member of parliament. "You don't notice how important it is until it starts to run out."

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During Hirohito

U.S. stiffens opposition to buffet IMF resources

WASHINGTON (R) — The United States, defying its allies on what will be an important economic policy issue for the Bush administration, is opposing plans to pump more money into the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The tough stance could set the stage for a clash between Washington and its major trading partners, most of whom favour an increase in the fund's \$120 billion capital base and want a decision by April.

"The United States continues to look at this with a very careful eye and there still remain a number of issues which are of concern to us," a U.S. official told Reuters.

The policy-making Interim Committee of the IMF, at its last meeting in Berlin in September, instructed the fund to prepare for a rise in quotas, or membership subscriptions, by the panel's next meeting in Washington on April 3.

But continued opposition by the United States, as the lending agency's largest shareholder, makes it increasingly likely that the April deadline will be put back.

"I don't know what is going to happen... but it's certainly possible legally to further extend the

deadline for an increase and it may well be that additional time is needed to resolve some of these difficulties," said the U.S. official, who declined to be identified.

Washington's misgivings about the need for new capital for the IMF, which makes loans to countries with balance of payments problems, were summed up by Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady in Berlin.

"At the time of competing demands and budget constraints, the case for additional quota resources must be compelling. There should be a clear vision of the fund in the 1990s and a demonstrated need for more funds — not simply a presumption that more is better," Brady said.

Since then, Bush has decided to conduct a major review of Third World debt strategy, providing yet another reason in the eyes of U.S. officials not to rush into an IMF quota increase.

As the next stage of the debt

strategy is likely to stress reducing the Third World's \$1.3 trillion debt instead of adding to it with new loans, the U.S. wants time to analyse what the consequences would be for the IMF, according to monetary sources familiar with the treasury's thinking.

The administration also wants to examine the fund's role in helping the Group of Seven industrial nations plan their economic policies, the sources said.

Washington, whose relations with IMF Managing Director Michel Camdessus are chilly, is wary of letting the IMF gain too much influence in this field.

Brady said in West Berlin that the problem of arrears owed to the fund by cash-strapped debtors such as Peru and Zambia also posed a hurdle to any increase in IMF resources.

Progress is being made on the arrears, but the breakthrough that the United States is looking for has not yet occurred.

Monetary sources said the overdue payments had reached \$3.5 billion and were still climbing.

The administration believes all these questions need to be addressed before it can seek additional funds from a Congress that is under pressure to curb spending.

Polish parliament approves major economic reforms

WARSAW (AP) — Parliament has approved bills allowing any private person to open a business of unlimited size and making it far easier for foreigners to invest in communist-ruled Poland.

The two pieces of legislation, which become law Jan. 1, are the linchpins of the government's plans to restructure Poland's socialist economy, and reverse four decades of encroaching state control of enterprises.

The 460-member Sejm, or parliament, approved the new "law on economic activity" unanimously with two abstentions. The bill on foreign investment drew

two "no" votes and six abstentions, the official PAP news agency reported.

Private business now accounts for about six per cent of Poland's non-farm economy.

Industry Minister Mieczyslaw Wilczek called passage of the bills a "historic breakthrough" and has said he hopes thousands of new businesses will open next year.

Although the government has expressed high hopes for the legislation, there have been some doubts published in the press.

"To... be able to invest in something, one has to have some-

World Bank urges Manila to speed up reform

MANILA (R) — Land reform should be speeded up, spending on family planning increased sharply, tax collection improved and the public sector deficit cut to sustain the Philippine economy recovery, the World Bank said in a report.

The bank said the Philippines had staged a remarkable economy recovery, after a severe contraction during the final years of ousted leader Ferdinand Marcos when capital fled the country.

It said the government must now tackle problems of deep-rooted poverty, poor productivity and rising population.

In a summary of the report, the bank said real gross national product would grow by 6.0-6.5 per cent this year, roughly in line with official targets.

The report said poverty and unemployment were critical problems and the country's \$28 billion external debt was a significant drag on the economy.

It called on the government of President Corazon Aquino to initiate new reforms to reduce fundamental inequalities.

"Public sector revenue performance is poor, and as a result the public sector is unable to provide adequate services to support the recovery or address the poverty problem," the World Bank said.

It praised the Philippines for reforms taken so far which have abolished export taxes on agri-

cultural products, ended agricultural monopolies, simplified the tax system and refocused public investment requirements.

The task now was to make more fundamental reforms in a country where millions live in extreme poverty and there are large inequalities in wealth and land ownership.

"It is critical, therefore, that the government move forward with a new agenda of reforms that goes beyond the removal of price and trade distortions and deals with these more fundamental structural and institutional issues...," it said.

The report said a government programme to provide land for landless farmers should be speeded up and spending on family planning should be expanded significantly to check the rapid population rise and growth in the labour force.

Tax collection should be improved to boost government revenue while the public sector deficit should be reduced.

The bank said the Philippines was well-placed for a period of strong industrial growth and its relatively low labour costs can attract companies from Japan and other countries.

It said investment rules should be changed to give foreign companies more incentives in line with rules in neighbouring countries.

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ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

Zalzala urges Arab protectionism

ABU DHABI (R) — Arab states should introduce measures to protect local industries from foreign competition, an Arab League economist has said. Abdul Hassan Zalzala, assistant secretary-general for economic affairs in the League, told Reuters in an interview that Arab states should also set up a common market to match similar moves by other powers. "We are facing an external economic onslaught that threatens our achievements and burgeoning industry," he said. "This should prompt Arab states to erect a customs barrier, and although this could harm Arab consumers, they should make sacrifices until our industries can stand on their feet," Zalzala said. "A common Arab market is feasible and has become a pressing need to immunise the Arab economy against giant world economic blocs and external penetration," said Zalzala.

Oman reports new oil discoveries

NICOSIA (R) — Oman's main oil exploration company has found further oil deposits in several parts of the country, the Oman News Agency has said. Quoting a Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) official, the agency said light oil had been found in a deep formation at the Huwaisah field in the empty quarter 300 kilometres southwest of Muscat. It said the well, drilled in March and April, was part of a deep drilling programme begun by PDO in north Oman fields after oil was discovered there at low depths at the end of 1986. The Huwaisah field first came onstream in 1971. The agency did not give the size of the new finds and said exploratory drilling was still going on. It said two other wells had been found last month during expansion at the Huwaisah field. PDO also reported a small find at the Mufriq field, 30 kilometres south of Qarn Amar in the central Oman fields. A find was also made in October at Binah near Marmul in the south Oman fields, the agency said without giving any details. PDO, owned 60 per cent by the Omani government and 40 per cent by Shell Petroleum, Total and Partex, has reported reserves in Oman of more than four billion barrels. Non-OPEC Oman produces about 600,000 barrels per day.

S. American firm to build giant plant

CARACAS (AP) — A Venezuelan-Italian consortium contracted with a Venezuelan construction firm to build what a company official called the largest gasoline additive plant of its kind in the Western hemisphere. Luigi Gasparini, president of Super Octanos, C.A., said that his company signed a contract with Vinceler, C.A., a Venezuelan construction company, to build the plant. Super Octanos is jointly owned by Pequiven, a subsidiary of the state-owned oil company Petroleos De Venezuela, and Ecofuel, a subsidiary of the Italian energy firm ENI. The plant will produce 500,000 tonnes a year of methyl-terbutyl-ether, a gasoline additive designed to raise octane levels, said Gasparini. The new plant, part of Pequiven's new petrochemical complex in Anzoategui state in eastern Venezuela, will be the largest of its kind in the Western hemisphere and the second largest in the world, said Gasparini.

S. Arabia boosts electricity output

RIYADH (OPECNA) — Saudi Arabia increased its power generation from 1,173 MW in 1975 to 14,644 MW by the end of 1987, enabling the kingdom to supply electricity to more than 2,000 factories across the country and thousands of farms, hospitals, schools and other establishments. According to a statistical report by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency (SAMA), total electricity production rose by 9.4 per cent to 45,866 million kilowatt hours (KWH) in 1988 from 41,904 million KWH in 1985. Over the same period, industrial power consumption registered an increase of 3.2 per cent from 11,656 million KWH to 12,029 million KWH, the report said. SAMA said electricity was being generated by five companies in the central, western, eastern, southern and northern regions. They were also converting saline into drinkable water. The Eastern Province, the agency noted, would remain the largest consumer in the country as most of the kingdom's industrial plants were located there. The province's demand rose to 19,519 million KWH in 1986 from 17,544 KWH in 1985. The agency said the number of electricity subscribers serviced by the companies increased to more than 2.03 million at the end of last year, compared with 351,531 in 1975.

N. Korea to process Iranian zinc, lead

NICOSIA, Cyprus (AP) — Iran has signed an agreement with North Korea for the export of 80,000 tons of concentrated lead and 250,000 tons of zinc, reported Iran's official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). The agreement signed in the North Korean capital of Pyongyang by Iranian Mines Minister Reza Ayatollahi also envisages the export by Iran to North Korea of 200,000 tons of industrial salts in exchange for 200,000 tons of steel bars and other metallic products, IRNA reported. The agency, which is monitored in Nicosia, said the lead and zinc exports would be returned to Iran after they are transformed into bars.

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Ligachev calls for reform, farming advice from West

MOSCOW (R) — A member of the Soviet Communist Party Politburo has called for urgent farm reform to improve production and distribution and said the country's leadership should seek advice in the West.

Yegor Ligachev, who heads the recently-created Agriculture Commission, was addressing a party meeting after a newspaper reported that meat rationing and restricted butter sales had been imposed across wide parts of the country.

It said meat was being sold by ration coupons in a third of the regions in the Russian Federation, the largest of the Soviet Union's 15 republics and the same had applied to butter sales in areas of southern Russia.

Ligachev, speaking in the southern Russian town of Rostov-On-Don, said urgent measures were required to upgrade rural living standards and make good annual production losses of millions of tonnes of foodstuffs:

"We need radical changes to reduce losses and to improve transportation, roads and food processing," he said in the speech shown on the evening television news.

He said the country should take the example of the 1930s

when it sent people to study in capitalist countries.

The daily Sovetskaya Rossiya, quoting December figures for the Russian Federation, said a widening gap between growing incomes and the supply of food and consumer goods was sowing discontent and stimulating inflation.

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Ligachev, who took over the Agriculture Commission after being moved out of the Politburo's key ideology post in September, acknowledged that rural residents earned far less than city-dwellers.

In recent years, he said, tens of thousands had left the land, particularly in key areas of Russia and the Ukraine.

"The difference in incomes is still enormous," he said of the income gap. "Ideas are now

being put forward to have residents of towns come to live in the countryside."

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev last July outlined a reform programme under which the state would lease land to small groups or families for up to 50 years.

The plan was part of an overhaul of the system to roll back the collectivisation of the 1930s and move farming back to the smaller-scale and cooperative methods of the 1920s.

Ligachev's recent transfer was viewed as a demotion as it appeared he had lost his de facto position as second-in-command to Gorbachev.

Questions have been raised about who is currently responsible for the country's agriculture — Ligachev or Viktor Nikonorov, agriculture minister since 1985.

Ligachev has frequently called for caution in approaching Gorbachev's reform programmes and championed a number of orthodox causes in both foreign and domestic policy.

OECD sees strong Greek growth

ATHENS (R) — The Greek economy

is at its strongest since 1986 and the pace is set to continue in the next two years, the OECD has predicted.

A semi-annual report by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) attributed the rise in productivity to a two-year stabilisation programme begun by the Socialist government of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou in 1985.

A 1989 budget, designed to

manufacturing output declined 0.8 per cent and 1.6 per cent in 1986 and 1987 but jumped 4.5 per cent in 1988. The OECD expects a rise of 3.25 per cent in 1989 and 2.75 per cent in 1990.

But the state's borrowing requirement, acknowledged by officials in Athens as the major problem facing the economy, is forecast to grow in 1988 to 15 per cent of the gross domestic product. It was 13.5 per cent in 1987.

The budget, designed to

boost spending on education, health and welfare, forecast a deficit of \$1.39 trillion drachmas (\$9.26 billion) compared to 1.16 trillion (\$7.73 billion) for 1988. The budget has passed parliament.

The OECD said inflation was expected to be down slightly in 1988. Finance Minister Dimitris Tsouvas has said it will not exceed 13.5 per cent compared with 15.7 per cent in 1987.

Singapore to diversify markets

SINGAPORE (AP) — Singapore

is making serious efforts to diversify its markets in an attempt to reduce dependence on rich nations that may turn protectionist, an official report said.

Last year, trade in the nation's most important commodities, imported crude oil and refined petroleum products, rose 2.5 per cent to 74.7 million tonnes valued at \$11.38 billion, the Trade Development Board said.

This year, trade in those commodities is expected to amount to 90 million tonnes. Currently, between 750,000 to 800,000 barrels of crude oil are refined in five major refineries in Singapore.

Oil imports for refining and bunkering totalled nearly one million barrels per day last year, according to the annual report for the fiscal year ending March 1988.

Pravda: Soviet 'mafia' behind ethnic dispute

MOSCOW (R) — The Communist Party daily *Pravda* said Monday a Soviet "mafia" had fomented recent unrest in the south of the country to protect privileges it said were threatened by Kremlin leader Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms.

Pravda said investigators had been on the verge of unmasking a web of groups trying to destabilise the republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan when the latest wave of violence erupted last month.

More than 60 died since February in violence focusing on the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Tens of thousands have fled their homes — complicating rescue efforts following this month's earthquake in Armenia.

Pravda, reprinting recent articles from Armenian and Azerbaijani newspapers, said "corrupt clans" and "bosses of the black economy" had joined forces to derail Gorbachev's perestroika programme to reform and modernise Soviet society.

"What should be noted is their organisation, unity and thought-out nature, making use of bribes to unstable, backward, unbridled

and parasitical elements," it said.

"In other words, what we have here is our own sort of mafia — one of the forms of organised criminal activity."

Pravda said legal specialists sent to Azerbaijan after the initial unrest in February had been absent to uncover "ties leading to the mafia nerve centre" when fresh violence erupted.

"Instead of undoing the web, these qualified jurists had to deal with fighting, robberies and pogroms which took place on the same days as illegal meetings," it said.

At the height of the latest unrest, hundreds of thousands of demonstrators gathered in the centre of the Azerbaijani capital, Baku, in violation of a curfew and a ban on public gatherings. Curfews and special regulations remain in force in many parts of both republics.



Azerbajians demonstrate in their capital of Baku against Armenian demands for the reunification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia (Sigma photo)

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The article accused the media of gross errors in disseminating inflammatory stories and recalled that editors of two youth newspapers in Azerbaijan had been dismissed.

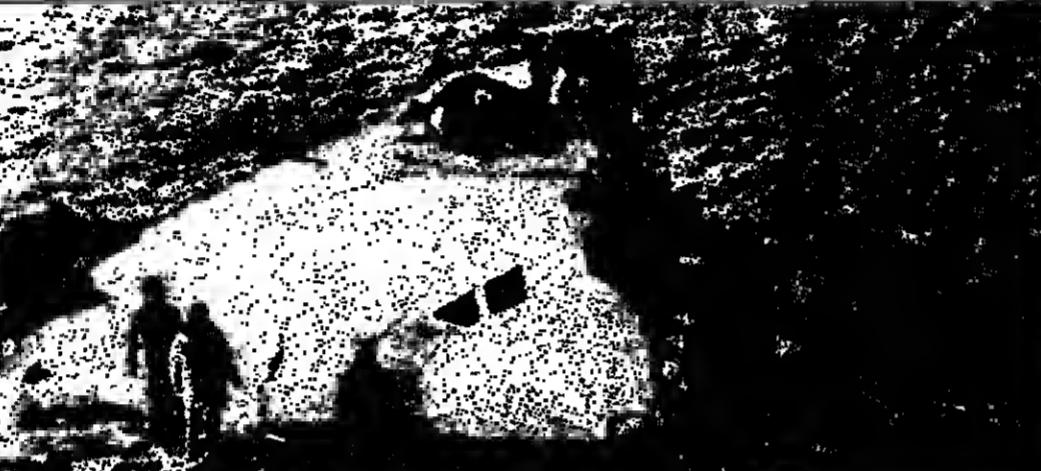
It also said intellectuals had done nothing to calm passions, particularly during unrest in Baku on December 5.

"Were they watching indifferently when groups of unbridled young people were breaking windows of houses and shops, sacking enterprises, overturning and setting fire to cars and beating drivers and passengers in

dispute, which has spilled over into almost all aspects of Soviet public life in recent months.

Armenian and Azeri leaders engaged in slanging matches at this month's session of the Soviet parliament, prompting senior leaders to call both republics to order.

Gorbachev, during his tour of earthquake-stricken areas, denounced as "power seekers" Armenians who continued to seek the return of the territory despite the earthquake which killed an estimated 55,000 people.



Police and rescue workers survey the cockpit of the Pan Am jet that crashed in Scotland Wednesday

Wednesday

The search for the missing bodies and wreckage entered its fifth day with still no official word on the cause of the crash, thought to have been either a bomb or a massive structural failure.

"It's too early. There's nothing to say," Kennedy said when asked if crash investigators had any progress to report.

The Times newspaper quoted former Chief Inspector of Air Accidents William Tatch as saying he now tended towards

the view that the disaster was due to structural failure.

He said structural failure could have occurred to the rear of the cockpit, which fragmented so much it was unreasonable to expect a detailed examination.

"I am still not dissuaded from the view that structural failure, dissociated from a bomb, is the basic cause of the accident," the newspaper quoted him as saying.

Police say they plan to recover

all the bodies if possible but bad weather on Christmas day meant helicopters were grounded and no bodies were found.

So far about 90 mostly American relatives of the dead have visited Lockerbie and groups have been taken to see the main crash site.

Some attended Christmas church services in the town, where prayers were offered for the crash victims.

Mandela spends Christmas in heavily guarded 'golden cell'

CAPE TOWN (R) — Jailed black nationalist Nelson Mandela, 70, received a brief visit from his wife, daughter and grandchildren as he spent Christmas in the lonely prison villa where the South African government now keeps him.

His wife Winnie Mandela, daughter Zindzi and three grandchildren spent 80 minutes with Mandela and handed over some small gifts with a cake iced in the colours of his African National Congress (ANC) for prison officials to pass on to him.

Although Mandela has been placed in more comfortable surroundings since he caught tuberculosis in Pollsmoor prison this year and was treated in hospital, he and his family have spurned Pretoria's offer of extended visiting rights.

"We will decline all privileges that are not extended to other political prisoners — men who are in jail for the same reason as Mr. Mandela," his wife told reporters last week before flying to Cape Town from Johannesburg.

ANC leader Mandela has

served more than 26 years in high-security prisons for plotting to overthrow white rule.

Winnie Mandela said nothing to reporters after her Christmas visit to the heavily-guarded bungalow, with swimming pool, set among guards' homes in the Victoria Verster prison in the town of Paarl.

However, she earlier told the Johannesburg Sunday Times he had been finding the isolation of his new quarters hard to bear when she first visited him there this month.

"Mr. Mandela has over the years never shown any emotions about his situation because it is a national situation. But that day I saw decades of solitude welling up on his face," the newspaper quoted her as saying.

"When he was at Pollsmoor prison he knew that his comrades were within reach. On the floor above or the room next door he knew there were men who shared his views. Now he is in his golden cell all by himself," she said in an interview.

The move to the bungalow has

been widely seen as a step in a government strategy of freezing Mandela in gradual stages so it can monitor and control the impact of releasing the world's most famous political prisoner.

In the interview, however, Mrs. Mandela dubbed it "a sarcastic version of imprisonment."

Despite the continued jailing of Mandela and many other activists, the people of the black townships celebrated openly and enthusiastically for the first time Sunday, after 12 "black Christmases" in which anti-apartheid groups halted festivities.

This year black leaders urged people to have fun, eat well and exchange gifts. At midnight Soweto and other townships around Johannesburg exploded with the sound of car horns and fireworks.

Residents in the new black suburb of Spruitview, northeast of Johannesburg, said they braved rainstorms to gather for community barbecues at Christmas, for the first time since their homes were built.

Tragedies spur Christmas calls for compassion

By Jocelyn Noveck
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — The earthquake in Armenia, a plane crash in Britain and the plague of AIDS were the focus of Christmas messages Sunday, as world and spiritual leaders called for compassion for those whose holidays have been shattered by tragedy.

Driving rain and the Palestinian uprising dissuaded crowds of tourists from celebrating the holiday in Bethlehem, the hilltop town where Christ was born. Several hundred pilgrims chanted mass in the Church of the Nativity while Israeli soldiers chased stone-throwing protesters in streets of the town.

"We are excited to be here, to see the places we have read about from childhood through Sunday school and Bible stu-

dies," said Charles W. Fleming, director of the Shiloh Baptist Church senior choir in Washington.

Pope John Paul II set a tone of compassion for the holiday when he offered his Christmas wish: That "science and love" would find a cure for the deadly scourge of AIDS.

Speaking to about 70,000 people packed into St. Peter's Square, the pontiff also appealed for help for survivors of the earthquake that rocked Soviet Armenia earlier this month, killing an estimated 55,000 people.

In Armenia, President-elect George Bush's son, John, and grandson, George, toured the disaster area and then went room-to-room at a hospital, passing out candy bars and games to children injured in the quake.

"We are excited to be here, to see the places we have read about from childhood through Sunday school and Bible stu-

Chinese-African clash reported in East China

PEKING (R) — Crowds of angry Chinese chanting "kill them" attacked black African students at three East China colleges, forcing more than 130 of them to flee to safety. Western eyewitnesses said.

The eyewitnesses told Reuters by telephone Monday that two black students were in hospital after Chinese beat Africans studying at Hehai University Sunday. Some Africans took refuge in the upper floors.

The eyewitnesses told Reuters by telephone Monday that two black students were in hospital after Chinese beat Africans studying at Hehai University Sunday.

The incident was the worst flare-up of racial tension in Chinese universities in the past three years.

The official New China News Agency (NCNA) earlier reported African students at Hehai University had attacked university employees Saturday.

It said two African students refused to register two young Chinese women at a university dance and were barred by university employees. The students, joined by others, attacked the employees, the agency said.

The agency said two African students and 11 university employees were hurt, one seriously.

About 135 Africans had fled their dormitories and were camping out at Nanking railway station, hoping to reach the safety of Peking, where their countrymen have embassies.

Some 200 police were barring them from leaving the city, the witnesses said.

Soviet Mars mission said having problem

HOUSTON (AP) — A multimillion-dollar Soviet space probe hurtling towards Mars apparently is having serious mechanical problems that could cause a severe setback for the Soviet space programme, a newspaper reported Sunday.

"There is enough smoke that I suspect there is a little fire," said Sam Keller, deputy associate administrator for space science and applications for the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

"You can't tell how serious it is, but there is no question they are having problems," Keller told the Houston Chronicle. "In recent years they have had a history of (planetary) mission that did not work."

Four months ago, word leaked that the Soviet Union lost Phobos I, the twin of the twin, unmanned Mars probes, because of a computer problem.

Phobos I and Phobos II were launched in July. They were scheduled to orbit Mars Jan. 29 and then begin circling Phobos in May.

12 killed in fresh Sri Lankan outbreak

COLOMBO (AP) — Paramilitary forces killed 12 Sinhalese just hours after anti-government militants raided a tea plantation and set fire to 10 Tamil homes, according to police.

It was the worst burst of violence since Prime Minister Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected president in the Dec. 19 election.

Premadasa, a Sinhalese, had said his victory would help curb ethnic violence on this Indian Ocean island, particularly by the People's Liberation Front, an extremist Sinhalese group that opposes the government's peace overtures to the minority Tamils.

A police spokesman said a group of Sinhalese extremists raided a tea plantation in Matale Saturday and torched 10 Tamil homes. More than 300 other Tamils fled the estate after the attack and sought refuge in a Hindu temple in Matale, about 100 kilometers north of Colombo, according to the spokesman.

Moderate Tamils have been demanding self-rule in the northern and eastern provinces, while Tamil extremists have been waging a guerrilla war to carve out a separate Tamil homeland. More than 850 people have died in the fighting.

The People's Liberation Front, on the other hand, abhors a peace accord signed in July 1987 aimed at ending the five-year-old Tamil insurgency. The front contends the government granted too many concessions by offering limited autonomy to the Tamils.

Residents of the world, especially our Christian countrymen on the blessed birthday of the great prophet Christ," Rafsanjani said.

In South Africa, the family of Nelson Mandela made a brief visit to the jailed black leader, who spent his 27th consecutive Christmas in prison.

In West Germany, Joseph Werner of Setauket, Long Island, spent Christmas eve in a solitary vigil on the western side of the Berlin Wall, distributing small black paper flags in what he said was a protest against the forced division of many German families.

Not all celebrations were subdued. In Wales, 72-year-old Ted Nash raised a glass to herald the birth of his third great-granddaughter to be born on Christmas day.

COLUMN

Nearly 700 plant species at risk

WASHINGTON (AP) — Nearly 700 native U.S. plant species are threatened with extinction by the year 2000, most of them in southern and subtropical regions with booming populations or economies, a private study says.

The Centre for Plant Conservation said it found 253 species of plant may become extinct within five years and another 427 may vanish by the turn of the century. As many as 52 of the plant species may already be extinct in the wild. Seventy-three per cent of the most critically endangered plants are found in Hawaii, California, Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, according to the centre, a consortium of 19 botanical gardens and arboreta based in Massachusetts.

"What we're dealing with here is just another sign of a planet in trouble and indeed, of a planetary environment in trouble," said Thomas Lovejoy, an expert on tropical rainforests at Washington's Smithsonian Institution. Experts generally agree that about 200 plant species have become extinct in the past two centuries. Conservationists worry that the rate may accelerate as population and economic growth jeopardise plant habitat. A 1973 study by the Smithsonian found that 3,000 of the nation's 25,000 species are endangered.

Norway to host study on 'near death experiences'

FLOROE, Norway (R) — A Norwegian village plans to host an international conference on the strange experiences of people who nearly died, although it may have trouble housing the experts.

Psychologist Rune Amundsen told Reuters that people who have been revived after heart failure or near-fatal accidents often report that they had left their body, seen a shining light, or felt filled with peace and love.

"We have to try to understand if these experiences are the final hallucinations of a dying brain or if they represent something else," said Amundsen, author of two books on the subject. "It is fundamental for science and humanity."

Amundsen has planned the conference on "near death experiences" for June next year. It will be attended by several hundred researchers, scientists and those who say they have experienced the phenomenon. But Floroe, on the west coast and with a population of 5,000, is short of beds.

Son tries to do what father could not

ANAHEIM: California (AP) — Daredevil Evel Knievel's son, Robbie, says he plans to try to accomplish the feat that put his father in a coma — jump a motorcycle 48.8 metres over the fountains at Caesars Palace in Las Vegas. "This has been a dream of mine since I was a kid and would sit and watch the film of my father's jump," Robbie Knievel, 26, said at a news conference announcing his jump scheduled for April 14. Evel Knievel fell off his motorcycle as it hit the ramp when he attempted the jump more than 20 years ago, and was in a coma for most of the next month.

The son's attempt will be produced by Showtime Event television and distributed to cable operators on a pay-for-view basis.

Robbie Knievel, who began performing motorcycle stunts with his father, already has topped his father's fear of jumping 21 cars. The younger Knievel soared over a 22-car lineup July 30 in Portland, Oregon, holding his hands over his head. His father retired from motorcycle riding exhibitions in 1980, and takes an active hand in his son's career.

Boesky will not get a dome for his home

MOUNT KISCO, New York (AP) — Ivan Boesky will have to return to a home without a dome when he is released from prison after doing time for insider trading.

Boesky paid a record \$100-million fine in 1986 to settle Federal Securities and Exchange Commission charges of insider stock trading. He is serving a three-year term after pleading guilty in April 1987 to a federal conspiracy charge, and will be eligible for parole in March. His wife, Seema, wanted to cap their 17-room Georgian mansion in Mount Kisco with a dome similar to the one atop Thomas Jefferson's Monticello home in Charlottesville, Virginia. Boesky needed special permission from the board because her plans would have added a third floor to the house, which is at the centre of a 76-acre (31-hectare) estate called Nanhview. North castle zoning law limits buildings to two-and-a-half stories.